CNCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
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THEORIES ON CULTS

ANNCR:

NO ONE IS SURE WHAT CAUSED MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE -- ALL MEMBERS OF AN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CULT -- TO TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES IN GUYANA LAST WEEKEND. BUT THEORIES ARE BEING ADVANCED. VOA'S JEFFREY SANDMANN EXPLORES THE QUESTION.

VOICE:

PSYCHIATRISTS WHO HAVE BEEN QUESTIONED ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS MASS SUICIDE POINT TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CULT'S LEADER IN THE BIZARRE AFFAIR. THE REVEREND JIM JONES IS SAID TO HAVE CONSTANTLY PREACHED THAT HE WAS THE FOCUS OF CULT MEMBERS' LIVES AND THAT THEY SHOULD ALL BE PREPARED TO DIE WITH HIM. HE WAS DESCRIBED AS A TROUBLED, IMBALANCED MAN WHO WAS ALSO VAIN AND POWER-HUNGRY. SOME SAY HE TOOK DRUGS.

BUT JONES HAD ONE ESSENTIAL QUALITY. HE WAS CHARISMATIC -- A STRONG, INTELLIGENT PERSONALITY WHO COULD BE CONVINCING, A LEADER WITH ALL KINDS OF NATURAL OR UNUSUAL FACULTIES ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. AND HE WAS APPARENTLY VERY GOOD AT INDOCTRINATING HIS FOLLOWERS -- PEOPLE DESCRIBED AS ALIENATED, DISGRUNTLED, CONFUSED AND FEELING ISOLATED IN A COMPLEX SOCIETY. PEOPLE SEEKING SIMPLICITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING. APPARENTLY, THEY WERE LED TO BELIEVE THEY COULD FIND THESE THINGS AT JONES' COMMUNE IN GUYANA.

ACCORDING TO PSYCHIATRISTS -- THE ABILITY TO BRAINWASH (INDOCTRINATE) IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN THE STRENGTH OF CULTS. INTIMIDATION AND THREATS OF BODILY HARM ARE PART OF THE PATTERN. OFTEN, THE EXPERTS SAY, PERSONS ARE REQUIRED TO REMAIN AWAKE FOR LONG HOURS -- BREAKING DOWN THEIR RESISTANCE. OUT OF THESE

CREATED HARDSHIPS IS SUPPOSED TO COME AN ALLEGIANCE TO THE GROUP AND TO ITS LEADER.

THERE'S ALSO A BUNKER SIEGE -- WE AGAINST THEM. SO WHEN CONGRESSMAN RYAN, HIS AIDES AND JOURNALISTS VISITED THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE THEY WERE APPARENTLY SUBJECTED TO DISGUISED HOSTILITY. THEY WERE PORTRAYED AS OUTSIDERS WHO CAME TO DESTROY THE SETTLEMENT. AND AFTER THEY WERE KILLED -- IT'S THOUGHT THAT JONES DETERMINED IT WAS TIME TO CALL UPON HIS FOLLOWERS FOR A FINAL ACT OF ALLEGIANCE -- TO DIE WITH HIM. IF THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED, THE CRITICAL FORCES INVOLVED WERE THE FANATIC LOYALTY TO A CHARISMATIC LEADER PREACHING SUICIDE AS A NOBLE ACT AND A DESPERATE FEAR THAT A HOSTILE WORLD WAS CLOSING IN.

THIS IS ONE THEORY OFFERED BY PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERTS. THE SECOND CONCERNS THE IMPORTANCE OF RITUAL IN CULTS. THE MASS SUICIDE THAT WAS CARRIED OUT IN GUYANA IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN REHEARSED SEVERAL TIMES -- AS PART OF THE RITUAL AND AS A TEST OF LOYALTY. BUT APPARENTLY, NOT UNTIL LAST SATURDAY WAS REAL POISON USED. IT'S BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THOSE WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE MAY HAVE BEEN MISLED -- BELIEVING THEY WERE JUST EXPERIENCING ANOTHER TEST, THAT THE RED FLUID THEY WERE ASKED TO DRINK WOULD PROVE TO BE HARMLESS AS IT HAD BEEN MANY TIMES BEFORE. PERHAPS SO. WE MAY NEVER KNOW.

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